



SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE

FEMALE CHARITABLE SOCIETY

IN

NEWBURYPORT,

MAY 22, 1809:

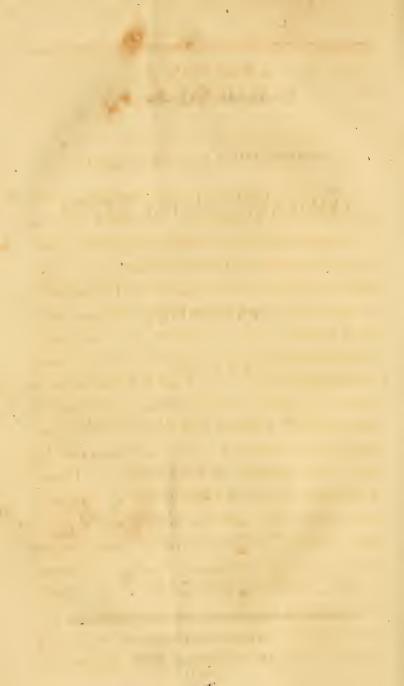
IT BEING THEIR SIXTH ANNIVERSARY.

By JOSEPH BUCKMINSTER, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN PORTSMOUTH (N. H.)

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A SERMON, &c.

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COLOSSIANS—3d. CHAPTER, 12th. VERSE.
"PUT ON THEREFORE BOWELS OF MERCIES."

BENEVOLENCE and compassion are affections and dispositions, to which all men make pretensions, and which all agree to praise. They can never want objects or occasions of exercise while the earth is subject to the curse of God, or man is heir to the fruits of the apostacy. And where a God is known, and his gospel acknowledged, they can never want the most powerful incentives. "God is Love"---this is his nature this his essence. But this fullness of the godhead softened into mercy towards our race, when rendered guilty and miserable by their sad apostacy, and the bowels of Divine compassion yearned towards them. He said unto them live; and the time was a time of love. These purposes of mercy could not be effected in their full extent, but by infinite sacrifice in the court of Heaven. God so loved the world, as to set forth his only begotten Son to be the propitiation for the sins of men, and to lay on him the iniquities of his people; he

responded this love in these ready and cheerful accents--- "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea, thy law is within my heart." For as much as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, in the form of a servant, a grade below his angels. For as much as they were sinners, he was made a sin offering, and they being under a sentence of death, he tasted death for them. In this mysterious personage, produced by the efforts of infinite love and wisdom, we see combined the titles of a just God and Saviour. We see mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embraing each other. We see every attribute of the Deity gloriously displayed in combined array, while mercy and compassion to sinners lead their van. Well might the Apostle say, "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, and study to be merciful, even as our Father, who is in Heaven, is merciful."

Though the afflictions of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the miseries of

futurity, or with the glory, that is to be revealed in the Saints, yet are they often many and very great; and from them no age, station, or condition of life can claim exemption. It was fit that man should taste the fruits of his folly; that he should know by sensible experience, that it was an evil thing and bitter, that he had sinned against the Lord; and by present sufferings be taught more highly to appreciate, and more humbly receive the riches of Divine grace and mercy. Therefore, when God promised, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head to rescue the hearts of our first Parents from utter despondency, he also said to the woman, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and to Adam, cursed be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it; thorns and thistles, shall it bear unto thee; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." Since that period the world has been an Aceldama; the human heart, the seat of direful and destructive passions. Diversified distress has, at intervals, marked every rank and path of life; and sin and poverty, disease and

death have maintained their empire. So that the whole human family are at different times, in different respects, and to different degrees, the objects of sympathy and compassion to all. The circumstances and conditions of men are greatly diversified, and frequently changing in the present state---arranged and ordered, not according to the merit or demerit of man, but according to the infinite wisdom and unerring counsel of God; to perfect this state as a state of discipline, to afford opportunity and occasion for the exercise of those graces and corruptions, which test the human character, and to prepare for a state of eternal retribution. "God hath set prosperity and adversity, the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him;" should find nothing wanting in the divine arrangement or dispensation, that should operate as a suitable mean to prepare rational, moral, sinful creatures for a day of reckoning and a state of retribution: For the salvation is of the Lord, and it is altogether of grace that any are saved; yet let it be remembered, it is through faith, which faith comes by hearing, and is wrought in the heart, or bestowed upon the subject agreeably to his nature, as a rational,

free, moral agent. And the wonderful scheme of mercy, that provides free pardon and salvation for sinners, effects, through the instrumentality of providences and instituted means, the redemption of the happy subjects from iniquity, and purifies them to the Lord, "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." God hath chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. And thus, while judged according to the Gospel, we are every one to give account of himself to God, and to receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or whether it be evil. The whole compass of our duty, religious, relative and social---of rank, station, and condition in life, will come into this account. And the authority that enjoins us to love God with all our heart, requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves. The Gospel, which confirms this authority, ministers grace to help us to perform this duty. And while it requires us to put on bowels of mercies, it presents to us the brightest example of them, in the character and works of Christ; and exhibits the most powerful motives and incentives to their exercise.

"Put on therefore, bowels of mercies." In meditating on these words---We shall

- I. Make a few remarks, explanatory of the words.
- II. Consider the more appropriate objects of these bowels of mercies.
- III. Offer some motives and arguments to excite to the performance of the duty enjoined --- and lastly,

Make some improvement with reference to the object of our present meeting. May God be glorified, and we accepted!

I. WE are to make a few remarks explanatory of the words. "Put on bowels of mercies."

No sentence can be more figurative, and none more expressive. The images are borrowed from man and his attire; from that part of man which, though hidden from human view, and guarded from external impression, is very suddenly and sensibly affected, through the organs of the body, or the reflections of the mind, with objects and occurrences, that interest the passions. Thus it is said of Joseph, when his brother Benjamin was presented to him in Egypt, "that he made haste to withdraw himself, for his bowels did yearn upon his brother." Of the mother, whose child Solomon was about

to divide, to detect an imposture to which his wisdom only was equal, it is said, she cried, "O my Lord, give her the living child and by no wise slay it, for her bowels did yearn upon her Son." From this effect which passionate excitements have upon this part of our frame, bowels are sometimes used for the heart, the seat of the passions, or the whole assemblage of them. Thus the Apostle to the Corinthians, "Ye are not straitned in us, ye are straitned in your own bowels." They are used to signify pity and compassion, and are adopted to express the tenderest, compassionate sensibilities of the Deity. "Is Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."---The same expressive language, and bold figure the Church uses in her expostulations with God, "Where is thy zeal and the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy tender mercies towards me? are they restrained?" The phrase indeed is Hebrew, denoting the tenderest compassion. These bowels we are directed to put on; not hypocritically, to make a fair show of the fruits without the principle; nor to pretend to the principle

without the fruits; but to be wholly invested, and covered with the principle; to put it on, as we put on our clothing; to call into visible exercise in all proper expressions our pity and compassion, and be clothed all around with them, as with a cloak. The command of the text then, stripped of its figure, is, that we should possess a principle of the tenderest compassion, that we should stir up and exercise not only mercy, but mercies, tendernesses of compassion, resenting the miseries of others, as sharing with them; ready to distribute, willing to communicate, according to our ability, and the particular complexion of the case, to all proper objects---which introduces our second particular.

II. To designate the objects of these tender mercies.

THEY are proper objects of compassion, who are in any kind of danger, affliction, or distress. But the fruits of our compassion must be diversified according to the different circumstances of the objects, and their different dangers and sufferings. The rich and the prosperous, the sons of pleasure and dissipation, being ignorant of God and of his grace, the slave of carnal appetite and passion, are objects of com-

passion with those, who have been taught of God, who have been made sensible of the awful danger and guilt of a state of unrenewed nature; who know the responsibility of man, and the indignation and wrath which will be the portion of every one that doeth evil. The fruits of compassion, however, that these want, are counsel and advice, admonition and reproof, prayers and tears. The sick and the afflicted, the sorrowful and perplexed, are objects of pity and condolence. "To him that is in affliction, pity should be shewn by his friend." But such may be their worldly circumstanses, such will they often be, that our soothing attention, our condolence and sympathy, our counsels and prayers, will be the only proper expressions of our mercy and compassion. The sons and daughters of poverty, who are straightened for the necessaries and comforts of life, are objects of compassion; the most regular expression of which, however, would be rather to find them means by industry to supply their own wants, if their health and age rendered it proper, than to supply them without, and countenance and encourage their indolence and inactivity. If age or sickness were added to their poverty, our compassion

should minister to their relief, by giving them those things, that are needful for the body; regulating our benefactions with wisdom and discretion, so as to render them most efficient and acceptable. But of all objects that can be named, none appear to me to have a higher claim on our compassion, than the children of the poor and destitute. And of these the Female Orphan rises to view, the most prominent object in the pitiable group, striking every fibre of sensibility in the human heart, and awakening the tenderest emotion of pity and compassion. Children born in a state of sin and guilt, heirs to the sad inheritance, which apostacy has made universal, entering a world full of sufferings and snares, in connection with parents, who are destitute of time or means to pay any considerable attention to their wants; their dangers and sufferings must be many. Ye sons and daughters of affluence and ease, imagine your children in this situation. But if their parents though poor are prudent, industrious, and pious; if a godly mother is continually dropping her instructions, and presenting her aspirations, while she hastily attends to them, as her engagements will permit, with the provision made in our country for common education,

they may be fitted to fill the station, which Providence assigns them, with reputation to themselves, and minister to the beauty, usefulness and comfort of social life. But if the character and disposition of their parents, with all their poverty, be the reverse of this, impious, intemperate, profane, and passionate, how deplorable the prospect for them and for society! The Spartans thought it improper, that any parents should educate their own children; but if any measures could be devised, by which such parents could be compelled to shut the doors of these nurseries of vice and ruin, an essential benefit would be conferred on the individuals, and on society. Ye pious parents, how would ye feel for your children, placed in such circumstances, and presented with such examples? Breathing air polluted with eaths and obscenity, hearing the conflict of angry and revengeful passion, and often feeling the effect of the tempest in unreasonable correction on their innocent heads? But while their parents live, the children have a shelter; and though often hard treated and hungry, yet they are saved from famishing. But when a father falls, when a mother dies, when both father and mother sleep in the dust, how pitiable the case!

how deplorable the prospects for the Orphan children! Are they not objects of compassion? Do they not call for bowels of mercies? Ye fond parents, think of your children, left thus helpless and forlorn, and what relief would it afford you, to have the anguish accompanied with the reflection, that there was an asylum opened for them under the management of piety, prudence, and tenderness; where all necessary wants would be supplied, and appropriate instruction given. The children of the poor and wretched, the harmless child of want, the fatherless and motherless call for the exercise of compassion in charity, and alms. They need a sanctuary, a shelter from the chilling storm and tempest; they need food and raiment; they need means of instruction, and regular government, that they may be disciplined and prepared for the humble, yet important station, that in human probability they will fill. To the accomplishing these desirable objects, liberal contributions must be made; societies formed; funds established; and the arduous, and too often thankless task of arranging, and managing such institutions assumed by some, who are willing to clothe themselves with the responsibility, and make the sacrifices which

the duty demands. For what is every one's business, is ordinarily by every one neglected. Such arrangements formed and organized should not paralyze our bowels of mercies towards these pitiable objects of compassion; but rather should they animate, quicken, and strengthen them, in proportion to the ground of confidence, that their fruits will be well employed. But we are,

III. To offer some farther motives and arguments to enforce the duty, and excite the disposition.

Here I am pressed with the crowd, that present themselves, and must pause to make selection; for every thing in heaven and on earth tenders motives and incitements to benevolence and compassion. Man's hopes and fears, his present, and his future interests combine to urge him to put on bowels of mereies. God is the source and assemblage of all excellence; man has none, but in his resemblance of God: In what can this resemblance be carried higher, than in sincere, unsophisticated beneficence and tender compassion for their proper objects? "God is love. He who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

ENCOMPASSED with the fruits and effects of divine goodness, we live, move and have our

being. Mercy is our daily bread, and our nightly repose. It is God's sun that cheers, his air that animates, and his bounty that feeds the innumerable tribes of creatures his hands have made. All eyes wait upon him; that which he giveth them, they gather. They live upon his goodness. But infinite and eternal mercy and compassion have triumphed towards man. God hath so loved him, even when in rebellious enmity, as to give his only begotten and dearly beloved Son for his relief; and being given, he spared him not from the deepest humiliation, and most extreme sufferings, that were necessary to testify the infinite odiousness of sin, and lay an honourable foundation for free pardon, and full justification. Beloved, if God so loved us; we ought to love one another. For we cannot be profitable to God: Our goodness extendeth not to him; but it may to the saints, and to fellow sufferers; and thus thanksgivings may abound to him.

EVERY thing in the person, offices and work of Christ; in his birth, life, miracles, death and resurrection, presents motives and incitements to benevolence. The offices, gifts and works of the Spirit in his illuminations, quickenings, strivings and consolation, soften to the

exercise of compassion, and solicit to the display of its fruits. Our present enjoyments; our hopes for those, who are the objects of our compassion, if our energies be well directed; our fears for them and for society, if they be withheld, and neglected; the probable prospect of benefit to society, and particularly to domestic enjoyment in the species of compassion, which we are this day called to exercise, forcibly constrain us to be liberal in the fruits of mercy. All these topics, which the time will permit us only to suggest, are fruitful of motives to charitable compassion. But in addition to all these, it is the special command of God. It is again and again enjoined upon us, that we should be merciful and compassionate; that we should give alms of such things as we possess; that we should be merciful, as our Father who is in heaven is merciful. To beget and cherish this disposition in us, to make us partakers of the spirit of Christ, is the object, tendency and effect of the gospel of Christ: In the want of this disposition then, and especially in the prevalence of its opposite, we never can have evidence, that we are the disciples of Christ, the subjects of his grace. We never can prove our relation to Christ, as his redeemed servants, or our title to the blessings of eternal life. The command in our text is associated with this discription of character---" Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, gentleness, &c. Faith without works is dead---and professions without practical attestation to their sincerity are nothing worth. "If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say to him, depart in peace; be warmed, be filled; notwithstanding, you give them not those things that are needful to the body---what does it profit?" Shall I proceed? Need you other motives and arguments to mercy and compassion? Come with me then from earth to heaven: Contemplate with me then, that most august scene, which shall shut up time, and introduce eternity: Look with self-application upon the issue of the final judgment. The Saviour has given us an anticipated description--and said, "When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and they shall be separated to his right hand, and to his left. Then shall the king say to them

on his right hand: Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink; a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me---inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say to them on his left hand---" depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and you gave me no meat; thirsty, and you gave me no drink: I was a stranger, sick, and in prison, and you visited me not." Lord this can't be, reply the covetous unbelievers, for we never saw thee. "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." In the view of such a scene and its issue; in the hearing of such accents from the lips of him whose words are yea, and amen, can we shut up the bowels of our compassion? Shall we not rather put on the tenderest mercies, clothe ourselves with them as with a garment, and rejoice in opportunities to exercise and display them towards such objects, as the Saviour has said we shall always have with us to be the receivers of his bounty, from our hands?

WE shall now attempt some improvement, adapted to the object of our present meeting.

WE are this day invited to the house of God, by an amiable and respectable circle of ladies, who "are associated for the charitable purpose of rescuing from poverty and vice; instructing and employing, and training up to virtue, usefulness, female orphan children." What a generous and compassionate design! "Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." The multiplied institutions, that our age has produced, wearing this family complexion, do honor to the human heart; test the humanity and compassion of our common country---and I hope, owe something to the influence of that religion, whose commanding features are love and mercy. We are invited by the managers of this institution, who present themselves and their orphan charge at the feet of mercy, to celebrate with them their sixth anniversary. To unite in rendering praise to God, that he hath mercifully disposed them to open an asylum for the most helpless and hopeless of our race---the female, orphan

child of want; and that he hath enabled them to rise superior to the discouragements and difficulties that they anticipated; that he hath so far seconded their sincere, though feeble efforts, and raised up friends and benefactors to them: that they have been able to sprinkle the dew of kindness upon the heads of so many helpless orphans, and bring them forward to hope and usefulness. They present this spectacle as a proof of the benevolence and usefulness of their institution; and as a pledge of their wise improvement of whatever you may entrust to their management, for the maintaining and promoting their pious and charitable design. They indeed appear to ask our alms; but for whom do they ask them? For themselves? For their friends? No! The helpless orphan, the child of woe. They are Almoners---but whose? even his who is king in Zion: They ask of you the box of ointment---but it is to anoint the feet of your blessed Saviour; by pouring it on the heads of his little ones. If we felt the power of correct principle, and viewed moral and spiritual subjects, as I am persuaded they are viewed by superior spirits; instead of feeling as if we conferred an obligation in meeting the wishes of those who seek support for wise and pious char-

itable institutions, we should feel, that the patrons and managers of such institutions conferred an obligation upon us, by affording an opportunity for the exercise of legitimate compassion, and stirring us up to traffic for eternity; to honor the stewardship with which we are entrusted; and send treasures before, to meet us in a better world. The most correct arbiter has decided, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" and he hath asserted, that "he, who hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and that, which he hath given, will he pay him again." We ought to rejoice, when opportunities for charity present, that admit of no hesitancy or doubt with respect to duty; and be thankful, when our alms are so bestowed, as to give reason to think, that through them thanksgivings shall abound to God. We are but stewards of what we possess---God is the proprietor. Our treasures, our talents are committed to us in trust. For their use and improvement we must give account. The rich and the poor, in their different degrees ever have and ever will diversify the face of society. But these distinctions dont mark degrees of merit, nor designate objects of divine favour. They minister to the beauty and comfort of social life; they afford

opportunity for the performance of different duties, and the exercise of different graces; they test the human character, and perfect this world as a state of probation and trial. Perhaps it may be right, that men should use and expend upon themselves and their connexions what is necessary, to support the credit and usefulness of their rank in society; but there is a portion they possess, that is given to bestow upon those, who need their help and assistance; and if they expend this on their pleasures or their pride, they are unjust and faithless stewards. What idea should we form of that servant, who should convert to his own use and gratification, what his master had just committed to him to carry to some poor suffering object? With what hesitancy would be report to his master? and what confusion would cover him, if he found himself detected? Some portion of our substance, whether this be greater or less, is entrusted to us, to distribute to those that are more necessitous than we. If we convert all to our own use, we imitate this faithless servant, without the cover of secrecy, under which he shrouds himself; for the eyes of our master are in every place, and he will judge the secrets of all hearts according to the gospel.

In our ignorance of the objects, that solicit our charity, and of the use to which they will devote it; we often find an apology or excuse for withholding our alms: but can this chilling blast blow on the present occasion? Our charity is solicited for the poor, forsaken, orphan female, cast upon the world in native guilt and corruption; destitute of means of support and instruction. A respectable number of pious, discreet, foster mothers, associated as their guardians and patronesses, are guarantees, that your bounty shall not be abused or misapplied. Can any doubt remain, whether these are proper objects of charity? Can any one reasonably wish to have his charity better secured? Does not the test of experiment honor the conclusions of reason and prove the utility of this institution? Look at these little children, snatched from poverty and vice, from rags and wretchedness: Neat they now appear---healthy, orderly, happy, perhaps I may not say gracious; but placed under the droppings of daily instructions, which are the channels, through which God ordinarily communicates grace. How different probably would have been their situation this day, had this institution been unkown among you? But is the benefit confined to them? Do you not

feel the beneficial influence? Does it not promise to increase the comforts of domestic life? Is not charity in this instance casting salt into a fountain, whose streams may, in due time, water and refresh all your families? Let then the stranger whom you have honored with your attention, who has seen the benefits of a similar institution in the circle of his more intimate friends, be heard as an advocate for this institution. Let him entreat each one according to the ability which God hath given, not only to be ready, but to be forward in this cause. Give this day liberally; give cheerfully; for God loveth a cheerful giver. Let not the merchant excuse himself, because the streams have been embarrassed, through which plenty flowed. Let him take from the stores that the former tides of prosperity wafted to his coffers, and seek a blessing upon future exertions. Let him that is honoured among men, honor himself, by shewing that he hath mercy on the poor. Let the man of science and profession, of husbandry and mechanic arts offer a portion of what God hath given him to this offering of the Lord. Let the man of pleasure, and the lady of fashion devote to this sacrifice, what they had designed for purposes, that would subserve neither

their reputation nor happiness. Fathers and mothers, in your bosoms I have an advocate; indulge your children to help these helpless orphans, and let their infant hands be formed to deeds of charity. O, that we could all make an offering on the altar of charity this day, of whatever might be abused to be the food of our pride, or the food of our folly; and in every thing use this world as not abusing it! No offering can be so great as to claim any reward at the hand of God---for it is of his own that we give him. None can be so small as to be unnoticed by him who is verily in this place--whose eye is upon us, and who is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love, which you may shew to his name. When the agents of these amiable ladies shall approach to ask your alms, debate not with yourselves whether you shall meet their wishes, but let the fulness of your hearts, and the correctness of the occasion silence all demur, and let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth.

But should you give all your goods to feed the poor, you would not reach all the demands of a merciful God, nor satisfy all the wishes of the preacher, unless with this inferior gift you give yourselves away to be the Lord's, and consecrate yourselves in soul and body, in talents and interests to him that died for you and rose again; then would all things be emphatically yours; all things would work together for your good, and you would have a sure title to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled; and that fadeth not away. In the language of the apostle let me then close my discourse, and "beseech you brethren; by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." And that "to do good and communicate, you forget not---for with such sacrifice, God is well pleased."

A Statement of the Funds of the FEMALE CHARITABLE SOCIETY from June 1808, to June 1809.

Expenditures.	Subscriptions, Interest	and Cont	ributions.
Dols. Cts.		Dols.	Cts.
437 80	Subscription,	261	
Balance, 60 93	Interest,	106	33
	Contribution.	131	40
498 73		-	
		498	73
	D	ols. C	ts.
Funds of the Society on In	terest. 1	109 5	
Two Shares in Essex Merri	mack Bridge. S	340	

1449

50

Since the commencement of the Society in June 1803, there have been admitted 16 Children, 8 are put out in approved families, and 8 remain under the care of the Governess. It is to be observed, the Children's clothing has been chiefly supplied by the Managers.

BOARD OF MANAGERS.

FOR THE PRESENT YEAR.

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Sarah Thompson, Second Directress.

Margaret Atwood, Treasurct.

Elizabeth Noyes, Secretary.

Anne Norton,

Eliza E. Carter,

Susanna Coffin,

Anna Wheelright,

Jane Greenleaf,

Elizabeth Coombs,

Miss Mary Woart,

Mrs. Sarah Goodhue, Governess.

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